



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

4600 Giant Springs Rd.
Great Falls, MT 59405
February 14, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

This letter is to notify you that I have made an amendment to a previous decision notice (dated April 14, 2017) regarding Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) implementation of an agricultural lease renewal on a portion of the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (WMA). My new decision is to cancel that lease renewal (set to begin April 2018) because the lessee failed to meet the former year's lease terms in 2017.

To maintain the original intent of the agricultural lease—utilizing alfalfa fields and small grain food plots on the Beckman WMA for the benefit of wildlife—MFWP will initiate a new, smaller-scale lease with an alternate lessee. This lessee will hay the wheel-line field, harvesting a first and second-cutting for use with his cattle, then re-watering the field and leaving it for deer and elk use. The hand-line field will be managed by the department for the benefit of deer, elk, and upland game birds, but taken out of hay production. The four of the five small-grain food plots will be maintained as is by the Habitat Forever partnership with MFWP; the largest will be allowed to regenerate to native vegetation.

Because there were no public comments received addressing the previous lease proposal, and the new area affected by the modified agricultural lease will affect 40 acres, rather than 103 acres, MFWP has determined a new Environmental Assessment (EA) and following comment period are unnecessary.

It is my recommendation to move forward with the proposed, modified agricultural lease on a 40-acre portion of the Beckman WMA. No changes have been made to the Draft EA other than changes specific to the new lease documents; please consider the updated lease documents along with the Draft EA and this Decision Notice as final.

Thank you for your interest and involvement.

Sincerely,

Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DECISION NOTICE

Beckman WMA Agricultural Lease

Region 4 Headquarters

4600 Giant Springs Rd.

Great Falls, MT 59405

(406) 454-5840

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) proposes to renew an agricultural lease on 103 acres of the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (WMA) northeast of Denton, MT. This lease agreement would continue the use of haying and food-plot production as habitat management tools on the WMA.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is required by MEPA to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments, evaluate those impacts through an interdisciplinary approach, including public input, and make a decision based on this information. Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks released a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for public review of this proposal on April 14, 2017 and accepted public comment until 5:00 P.M. on May 12, 2017.

Notice of the proposal and availability of the Draft EA was published in the *Lewistown News-Argus* and *Great Falls Tribune*. Copies of the Draft EA were distributed to neighboring landowners and interested individuals, groups, and agencies to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. The EA was available for public review on MFWP's website (<http://fwp.mt.gov/>, "Public Notices") from April 14, 2017 through May 12, 2017. An MFWP statewide news release was issued April 14, 2017 and posted on MFWP's website the same day.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks received zero comments on the proposed action.

DECISION NOTICE

Using the EA and public comment, a Decision Notice must be rendered by MFWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified for this proposed action. No adjustments or issues were identified.

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks' analysis supports renewing the agricultural lease agreement for an additional six years.

I find there to be no significant impacts to the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the EA is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

After review of this proposal, it is my decision to accept the Draft EA as final, and to recommend the renewal of the agricultural lease on the Beckman WMA.

The Final EA may be viewed on MFWP's website, or be obtained upon request from MFWP's Region 4 Headquarters.

May 12, 2017 *original*

Gary Bertellotti 2/12/2018

Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor